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Knowledge of Pedagogy and ICT for Effective Communication in Language Teaching

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Abstract

Effective communication is an essential part of any kind of teaching. It is very much true with the language teaching-learning process. Though CLT is appreciated by many applied linguists, it is not well implemented in many EFL contexts. For successful communication in the present day language teaching, it is necessary for the teachers to possess pedagogical and ICT perceptions that can make the best use of the promise of CALL and CMC.

Key words: ICT, CLT, CALL, and CMC

Introduction

Effective communication is the key to any field that requires interpersonal relationships. Teaching is an area that is much dependent on teacher-learner communication. Effective communication results in effective teaching. Also, it helps in strengthening learner-teacher

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relationship. Interactions and discussions are considered the most widely accepted means of class-room communication. Education implications of modern theories point out the shortcomings of passive one-way learning. The very idea of learner-centred approach is based on communication. These facts remind us of the importance of communication skills on the part of a teacher for the development of a better teaching-learning process.

However, many teachers fail to recognize this, and they prove to be ineffective teachers. Even teacher education centres fail to understand the realities and fail to equip the future teachers with better communication skills. “One of the most neglected aspects of teacher training is thorough preparation in the diverse communication skills that are needed by good teachers in today's schools” (Morgan, 1989).

When ineffective communication occurs in language teaching, the catastrophe can have far reaching consequences, as the essence of language is to communicate. Language teachers need to be effective communicators with a thorough knowledge of various aspects of communication strategies in their dealings with their learners, knowing the fact that interpersonal communication skills form almost half of language teaching. Considering this fact, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been appreciated by many applied linguists and language educators as an effective language teaching approach. However, research shows that CLT has been facing problems in its implementation stage.

Sometimes, lack of diligence on the part of the teachers stands in the way of successful implementation of the teaching-learning process. However, many teachers correctly identify the communicative activities of CLT and understand what CLT means. At the same time, they uphold many misconceptions. These misconceptions and the resulting barriers to the implementation of CLT are found in many Asian ESL and EFL contexts. Because of these misconceptions and barriers, teachers cannot implement CLT in class rooms (Chowdhury, 2012).

This article deals with some of the most important aspects that can be helpful to form the perceptions of an ideal language teacher of our times.

The Role of Pedagogy

Teaching is a profession that requires some basic personality traits that are fit to accomplish the target of teaching very well. This leads some researchers to the extent of saying that there may be some individuals who are born *not* to teach (Ur, 1997). Such ideas can be controversial when we find thousands of teacher education centres that are meant to create emerging teachers. However, we accept the fact that as a disseminator of knowledge as well as values, teachers should possess highly distinguished personality traits that may vary from one culture to another. This does not mean that content knowledge and personality are the only two qualities of an effective teacher. Although personality cannot be taught, specific characteristics and behaviors can be isolated and developed. Without teacher education research, the traits and strategies of effective teachers would not be identified (Malikow, 2006). So, it necessitates the teachers to acquire the basic requirements for teaching a particular subject.

Knowing Your Target Group

Knowing your target group is an essential component in any kind of teaching. Many language teachers fail in this aspect, especially EFL teachers who are put in a different cultural context. In many parts of the world, language learners need a high level of motivation to have a positive attitude towards learning. It is noticed that motivated children with positive attitudes towards the target language, learners who enjoy being in the classroom and who feel that what they learn will be useful for them in their life, perform better than others. Thus, it should be the aim of the educators to promote enjoyable learning, through a pleasant atmosphere and interesting material, in order to promote motivation (Petrides, 2006).

Asking thought-provoking questions of the learners and encouraging them to articulate their thinking is a common communication strategy used by many teachers. However, creating a classroom atmosphere where students are free to ask thought-provoking questions is the real success of education. It has been widely noticed that some teachers fail to take the students' questions seriously, and create a huge communication gap. Therefore, teaching is not just imparting knowledge; instead a series of various pedagogical applications. Mohan states:

It is not enough to be merely a teacher who wears a “know all” mask, but a facilitator who understands her students, empathizes with him/her, and in fact becomes a part of the search with her students, for knowledge and wisdom. One of the advantages of systematically incorporating into one's teaching these learning-how-to-learn tasks is that learners became aware not only of their own preferred ways of learning, but also the fact that there are choices, not only in what to learn but also in how to learn (Mohan, 2012).

Effective Use of ICTs

For better communication in the present day classrooms, Information and Communication Technologies help a lot. ICT components help teachers in enhancing their skills as well as better dissemination of knowledge. One of the rationales of the use of ICTs in education is faster communicability, i.e., by constructing presentations, learners can communicate their points of view using different platforms or findings. They can work together to share ideas, and develop their social skills through debate with their partners. They can learn how to manage their feelings when they disagree about an issue or understand other people's needs and emotions and enhance their own self-awareness. Technological and pedagogical perceptions of the teachers need to be modified in order to achieve the complete use of ICTs in the teaching learning process. Teachers who intensively use information technology emphasize the importance of using information technology for facilitating students' participation in

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progressive inquiry, collaborative learning, the learners' active engagement in knowledge formation process, and learnability of intelligence more than other teachers (Lehtinen, 2001).

Early studies of ICT-mediated instruction's effect on student-learning have been characterized as the “no significant difference” phenomena. That is to say, whatever medium of instructional delivery – film, radio, television, telephone, or computer – was used, no significant difference on performance measures was found between students receiving ICT-mediated instruction and those receiving traditional face-to-face instruction in a classroom. Both groups performed equally well. Such studies were based on the effectiveness of drill and practice and tutorial software programs that reflected the behaviourist approaches to education. But, studies focusing on the use of computer-mediated instruction conducted in the 1980s found more positive results.

In the 1990s, use of ICT in schools moved towards engaging students in “authentic” learning tasks in which students use computers, software, and network access to simulate events, communicate, collaborate, analyze data and access information resources. For these applications of ICT in schools, the research data are less extensive. However, some individual studies have been conducted that demonstrate positive learning and affective outcomes of ICT enabled education. It appears, therefore, that ICT, properly used, may enhance and increase communications between people. After analyzing the different studies in this area, Blurton comes to the following conclusions:

In conclusion, evidence has consistently shown ICT-mediated instruction using conventional teaching methods is as good as traditional face-to-face instruction and, in the case of computer-based instruction, may in select instances improve student learning and attitudes towards learning. However, the picture is less clear – but promising – for more sophisticated uses of ICT in the classroom, especially for the host of applications and methods that support “constructivist” learning, in which students are

encouraged to work in rich environments of information and experience to build their own understandings about them. Worldwide, research into the effectiveness of ICT-mediated instruction is continuing and should provide a clearer picture of the effectiveness of ICT in supporting constructivist pedagogy (Blurton, 2002).

CALL and Present Day Classrooms

The developments in technology paved the way for an area of discussion in language teaching called Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Though it emerged by the rapid development of technology from the early 1980s, CALL has now become an essential component of second and foreign language learning pedagogy. In the past, though it was viewed just as a supplement to classroom teaching, communicative interaction-based CALL activities are now used to promote learner autonomy and to encourage involvement with the target language both inside and outside of the classroom. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been defined as “the search for and study of applications on the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levi, 1997). It is now used in a variety of instructional settings. This has necessitated the language teachers to possess CALL expertise that includes both practical skills and a thorough understanding of information technology (IT).

CALL and Language Teaching

Though Computer assisted Instruction (CAI) is common to teaching of all subjects, CALL has become an exclusive part of language teaching, especially Second Language (L2) learning. . CALL can be employed in many ways. It is sometimes promoted as a complete method of learning a language. In classrooms it can be used both as a reward for better learners or a remedial aid for weaker ones. Some language labs integrate CALL and some teachers in foreign countries use CALL activities based on email and the World Wide Web (WWW) to supplement student learning. “It is likely that in future, computer based language tools will become both pervasive and invisible; that is, they will be commonly included in other

applications and computer interfaces will become almost completely intuitive, perhaps through computer software able to recognize and intelligently respond to speech” (Beatty, 2003).

Computer-mediated Communication

One of the important components of CALL is Computer-mediated Communication (CMC), which refers to a situation in which computer-based discussion may take place but without necessarily involving learning. Vast research on computer-assisted language learning (CALL) proposes that the integration of CMC into EFL learning can provide learners with more authentic input and more opportunities to participate in the target socio-cultural contexts; both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge can be promoted. Moreover, motivation, learner autonomy, social equality, and identity can also be encouraged through the use of CMC inside and outside of the class (Larsari, 2011).

Conclusion

Knowledge of pedagogy and ICTs is essential for the successful implementation of communication strategies promised by CLT. The teacher education of the developing countries needs to give serious emphasis on the development of the emerging teachers’ communication skills. Knowledge of pedagogy and the basic assumptions of ICT integration in education are the key factors that can create communicative atmosphere in modern classrooms. While the technologically advanced countries have gone ahead with the integration of CALL in language teaching, the conditions in many of the third world countries are not promising. It’s high time for the educators in those countries to think seriously and come up with effective strategies, so that the current digital divide can be minimized.

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